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ABSTRACT

Analysis of several texts simplified to teach reading comprehension to college second language students shows that simplification affects both textual cohesion and coherence. Moreover, simplification restricts the amount of significant semantic information and creates a more transparent pattern of reference. The use of cohesive conjunctions varies inconsistently, while the use of modality markers decreases slightly. In some cases, more metalinguistic markers are included. The results indicate a need for further research on the use of various discourse organizers and their role in reading comprehension, on the effect of the reduction of semantic information dimensions on the text's information content, and on the possible loss of complexity inherent in authentic texts. The complexity of the text helps the reader process meaning as information relating to extra-textual phenomena. (MSE)

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SOME OBSERVATIONS ON COHESION AND COHERENCE IN SIMPLIFIED TEXTS

by

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1. Introduction

This paper relates to Lautamatti (1978) which discusses the development of the discourse topic in simplified discourse. The texts to be analysed are the same as in the previous study. They have been produced, on the basis of an original text, by language teachers and linguists for the purposes of teaching reading comprehension to foreign, university-level learners of ESP.[1]

By simplification we mean in this paper a procedure by which authentic informative texts (i.e., texts produced for the purpose of transmitting information in a certain field of study) are modified for language teaching purposes, generally by language teachers themselves. The process is based to a great extent on the simplifier's experience as a language teacher and on his intuitions about language. The most obvious features to change in simplification are sentence length, vocabulary, and syntactic structures.[2]

[1] Some of the simplifiers point out, however, that the foreign language skills of university-level students vary greatly from one country and culture to another. Their varying experiences as teachers may thus explain the different levels of the simplifications they produced.

[2] But see Schlesinger (1968), who, on the basis of experimental results, argues for the importance of semantic factors in the comprehension of syntactic structures.

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Readability indices are commonly based on these, and so, according to Mountford (1976:143-4) is the production of simplified readers. Less is known about other types of changes brought about by simplification of written discourse[3], whereas simplified forms of spoken language have received a fair amount of attention lately e.g., baby and foreigner talk, pidgins, immigrant workers' language, and interlanguage.

In this paper we shall discuss changes in cohesion and coherence caused by simplification, and their possible relevance for the reading process. Since the material analysed is very limited, the results of the analysis are offered as a starting-point for discussion and further work, not in any way as conclusive facts.

2. Theoretical background

The term cohesion is used in the way of Halliday & Hasan (1976) (see also Gutwinski 1976). They define cohesion as a network of non-structural (structural being used in the sense 'restricted to the clause'), semantic, text-forming relations (Halliday & Hasan 1976:7). They consider a text a semantic unit, realized by a sequence of sentences, and see cohesion as a means of providing continuity on a semantic, textual level; whereas grammatical structuring is used to the same effect at the level of sentences, clauses, etc. (Halliday & Hasan 1976:293). This distinction between above-sentence and below-sentence properties is also made by Gutwinski (1976:49). It seems, however, that this view may be a kind of over-reaction to earlier treatments of the sentence as the basic grammatical unit of language, and has lead to a somewhat arbitrary distinction. The position of sentences as intermediaries between grammatical and semantic continuity seems less clear-cut than what has been proposed in the theory of cohesion. However, in this paper we will restrict the study of cohesion to intersentential features. (The term sentence is used in the sense of 'text-sentence', cf. Lyons 1977: 622.) Intersentential analysis was considered a better starting-point here than inter-clausal, since properties of sentences and clauses are part of the foreign language learner's knowledge of the foreign language, while the effect of intersentential, i.e., actual text-forming, features, receives less emphasis in language teaching.

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[3] Mountford (1976) discusses the need for a theory or model of discourse which would take into account both the linguistic structure of the text and its rhetorical structure as a piece of discourse. Lautamatti (1978) discusses the development of the discourse topic in simplified discourse by comparing a group of simplified texts.

In the system of Halliday and Hasan, the main categories of linguistic devices by which cohesion is expressed, are the following:

- reference (pronominal, demonstrative, etc.)
- substitution (with so, do, etc.)
- ellipsis (nominal, verbal, clausal)
- conjunction (devices indicating relationships between clauses and sentences)
- lexical cohesion (repetition of lexical items, synonyms, collocation, i.e., association of lexical items that regularly co-occur).

While Halliday & Hasan consider cohesion as a necessary but not sufficient factor in creating a text (Halliday & Hasan 1976:298-99; similarly Gutwinski 1976:33), Widdowson (1977a:160) points out that this is not always the case. In spoken language, dialogues like the following form a unity without cohesion (Widdowson 1977a:165):

(1) A: Doorbell!
B: I'm in the bath.
A: OK.

The theory of cohesion would seem inadequate to handle this kind of text, which makes little sense as a linguistic sequence of sentences. Its interpretation must be based on its character as an act of communication consisting of utterances in a context. (Widdowson 1977a, and Mountford 1976:146 distinguish between the two approaches by speaking of text and discourse, respectively, but for this paper it has proved impractical to restrict the sense of 'text' in this way.) In written informative texts the communicative unity of utterances, which Widdowson calls coherence, may be rare or impossible without cohesion, but the distinction is still valid. As a piece of discourse of communicative language, a written text has both cohesion and coherence, the latter being its structure as a sequnce of acts of communication (see also Mountford 1976:146-7).

For effective communication, the information in written texts is usually presented in a form which helps the reader to process it, to evaluate it, and to relate it to earlier information, and this form may thus be considered part of its coherence. For this purpose writers use different types of non-topical material, i.e., material not directly related to the subject-matter or topic of discourse (Lautamatti 1978). This material contains aids like discourse organisers, illocution markers (indicating to what purpose something is asserted), modality markers (indicating the truth value of what is said), metatextual markers (commenting on the language itself), metalinguistic markers (commenting on language items), and the

writer's personal commentary. While most discourse organisers would seem to coincide with Halliday & Hasan's category of conjunction (though the former category seems to be more inclusive), the other non-topical types are not dealt with in their system. Of course, they may be linked by cohesive ties, as in Scientists suggest... .They claim..., but the system does not keep them apart as markers of textual coherence.

The implication of a distinction between cohesion and coherence is obvious. If the aim of simplification is to make a passage more easily comprehensible, or, in Widdowson's words, to "adjust [the language user's] language behaviour in the interests of communicative effectiveness" (Widdowson 1977b), it should optimally include also those aspects of discourse which are used to facilitate communication (Mountford 1976:146ff; Widdowson 1977b).

However, as was pointed out earlier, studies of simplification show that the simplification process is generally carried out by changing the lexicon, the syntactic structures and the length of sentences, i.e., it seems to affect mainly the topical material. The framework within which the information is presented --its relatedness to earlier information, its truth value, its internal organisation-- may seem to make a text more, not less, difficult to read, and is consequently omitted or reduced. After all, inclusion of non-topical material means lengthening of sentences, more complex syntactic structures, and possibly a fairly high level of abstraction. If the simplifier is a language teacher, not an expert of the field, he may naturally feel unqualified to handle elements of the text which relate to the value, relevance, or structure of the information.

3. The procedure

Cohesion and coherence, then, are examined here as part of the semantic and communicative structure of the text, likely to undergo changes in the process of simplification. To obtain simplified texts, a number of language teachers and linguists were asked to simplify a piece of authentic informative writing. They all received the following instruction: "Simplify the following text preserving its character as a piece of discourse, to make it more readable for foreign language students on tertiary level of education."

Out of the simplifications produced, four were rewritings of the original text (OT), and were thus suitable for our analysis. Furthermore, these simplified texts (ST1, ST2, ST3, and ST4) were produced by native

speakers of English. The texts have been appendixed.

The following features in the texts were analysed:

- the over-all number of all cohesive ties compared with the number of sentences and words in each text,
- the number of lexical ties, referential ties and conjunctions per number of sentences and number of words. Only intersentential conjunctions have been counted. Substitution and ellipsis as cohesive devices have been excluded, since their use in written informative texts seems to be rather infrequent,
- frequency of different types of ties,
- distance of ties from their antecedents,
- number and type of non-topical material (discourse organisers, modality markers, illocution markers, metalinguistic and metatextual markers, writer's commentary).

Only one instance of each tie per sentence has been counted, though it is questionable whether this is the best approach. After all, a cohesive item may be considered to tie with the antecedents every time it appears in a sentence. The analysis of cohesion has been carried out according to the system used in Halliday & Hasan (1976). The discussion will be illustrated with examples from the texts.

4. Results and discussion

4.1. First, some general trends in STs shall be pointed out. As shown in Table 1, the number of words per text, as well as the average number of words per sentence has decreased. On the basis of previous research this was to be expected. The amount of reduction, however, depends on the strategy of simplication used. As has been shown elsewhere, ST1 represents a strategy of simplification which uses short sentences generally only with a succession of main clauses in place of complex sentences. This, furthermore, leads to the development of a number of new subtopics (Lautamatti 1978). Thus the number of sentences, which in the other STs remains very close to the original, is doubled in ST1. This also explains the relatively smaller decrease in the number of words in ST1. Similarly, ST1 differs from the rest of the texts in that the average number of words per sentence has decreased more than in the others. ST3, on the other hand, represents a simplification strategy where sentence structure and topical structures (as defined in Lautamatti 1978) have been retained very much unaltered, while the simplification is based on reduction of modifiers and the use of more

	OT	ST1	ST2	ST3	ST4
number of words	352	324	238	201	240
number of sentences	10	20	11	10	11
words per sentence	35.2	16.2	21.6	20.1	21.8

Table 1.

Changes in number of words, number of sentences, and number of words per sentence in simplified texts.

concrete concepts. This is reflected in the great decrease of the number of words (almost one half) in the text as a whole and in the individual sentences.

4.2. Simplification does not seem to affect the relative frequency of cohesive ties in these texts (cf. Table 2). Thus the number of ties per number of words remains almost the same, except in ST1, where it is slightly higher. The figures showing the number of ties per sentence are naturally lower for STs, where the sentences are shorter than in OT. In ST1, the higher figures may again reflect the different strategy of simplification.

	OT	ST1	ST2	ST3	ST4
number of cohesive ties	77	122	57	41	56
number of cohesive ties per number of words	0.21	0.37	0.24	0.20	0.23
number of cohesive ties per number of sentences	7.7	6.1	5.2	4.1	5.1

Table 2.

Total number of cohesive ties and their distribution per number of words, and per number of sentences.

The chopping up of compound sentences into several short ones retains the number of intersentential ties to a higher extent than in the other STs, and increases the absolute frequency of ties as compared with OT.

The following example is a case in point:

(2) OT: This helplessness of human infants is in marked contrast with the capacity of many new born animals to get to their feet within minutes of birth and run with the herd within a few hours. (S. 5)

ST1: Human babies are unusual in this characteristic, if we compare humans to other animal species. Many new-born animals can stand on

their feet very soon after being born. Often they can run with the herd a few hours later. (S. 7-9)

4.3. In the use of different types of ties some trends may also be observed (cf. Table 3). In all STs, the proportion of lexical ties slightly decreases and that of grammatical ties (reference and conjunction) slightly increases. Also, in the category of lexical cohesion there is a general trend towards a relative increase of repetition of lexical items in all texts except ST2.

	OT	ST1	ST2	ST3	ST4
LEXICAL total	88.3	82.8	84.2	78.0	78.6
of this:					
repetition	48.5	76.2	43.8	65.6	54.5
synonyms, near-synonyms, same root	26.5	12.9	29.2	18.8	22.7
collocations, superordinates	19.1	10.9	18.8	12.5	18.2
antonyms	5.9	-	8.3	3.1	4.5
GRAMMATICAL total	11.7	17.2	15.8	22.0	21.4
of this:					
reference	77.8	95.2	66.7	77.8	91.7
pronominalisations	14.3	30.0	33.3	28.6	36.4
definite article, demonstratives	71.4	60.0	66.7	57.1	54.5
comparatives	14.3	10.0	-	14.3	9.1
conjunction	22.2	4.8	33.3	22.2	8.3

Table 3.

Types of cohesion and their frequency in percentages in the original text, and in the simplified texts.

4.3.1. The use of such types of lexical cohesion as synonyms, near-synonyms, and items from the same root as the antecedent, has decreased in all STs except ST2. Collocational items and the use of superordinate concepts have decreased in ST1 and ST3, while in ST2 and ST4 they are almost as frequent as in OT. The two tendencies, to diminish the proportion of lexical types of cohesion, and to increase the proportion of repetition

of items, support Mountford's findings of a "more transparent system of lexical cohesion" in simplified texts (Mountford 1976:155), and indicates a lowered type-token ratio of lexical items in simplified texts.

ST1 and ST2 show opposite patterns in the change of cohesive features. ST1 uses a great deal of direct repetition of items, while it greatly decreases the number of synonymous and collocational expressions. This seems to relate to the strategy of simplification in ST1: the use of simple short sentences obviously necessitates the development of an idea or subtopic over several sentences, which increases cohesion (cf. (2)). The figures may also reflect a tendency to restrict the vocabulary for the benefit of the reader. -- ST2 on the other hand, uses synonymous and collocational items proportionally more frequently than OT. This could be taken to mean that the simplifier has retained much of the original lexical complexity, while relying on 'simplified topical development' (as defined in Lautamatti 1978), shortening of sentences, and reduction of subsidiary material to create a simplifying effect. To verify this, we would need a detailed comparison between ST2 and OT. The following passages will illustrate the point:

(3) OT: Although young animals are certainly at risk, sometimes for weeks or even months after birth, compared with the human infant they very quickly develop the capacity to fend for themselves. It would seem that this long period of vulnerability is the price that the human species has to pay for the very long period which fits man for survival as species. (S.6-7)

ST1: Young animals may get hurt and even die during their first year, but those that survive are able to look after themselves. A young human child takes much longer to look after himself. We must suppose that this long period of learning is necessary to allow the human race to survive as a species. (S.10-12)

ST2: Although animals remain vulnerable for attack for weeks, in some cases for months, after birth, they become able to survive without help much more quickly than human babies. Man's survival as a species depends on this particularly long period of infant vulnerability. (S.6-7)

4.3.2. The proportion of grammatical cohesion has increased in all STs (cf. Table 3). This is mainly due to a greatly increased use of pronominal reference, i.e., reference by personal pronouns, possessive adjectives (Halliday & Hasan's determiners) and possessive pronouns. The

use of pronominal reference is natural in the situation of foreign language learning and teaching, where a closed system such as pronouns can be easily memorised. The increased use of pronominal reference in simplified texts may further be due to the greater clarity of reference in the STs, from which much of the subsidiary material has been omitted. In authentic texts the use of pronominal ties may be more liable to cause ambiguity of reference.

A reduction of ideas in STs also influences the type of cohesion that will be used later on in the text (cf. (4)).

(4) OT: Without care from some other human being or beings, be it mother, grandmother, sister, nurse, or human group, a child is very unlikely to survive. (S.4)

ST3: Without help from other human beings the baby is unlikely to live (S.4)

Here the reduction of subordinate ideas leaves only those lexical items which carry the main information. Consequently, later references will be easier to trace, particularly if they occur in the form of a repetition of the lexical item, or of pronominal reference. Thus, where OT has the sequence a human infant - new born children - the new born child - a child (1-4), ST3 has a baby - it - it - the baby (1-4).

On the other hand, cohesion based on the use of demonstratives, definite articles, or comparative expressions such as other, more, etc., has slightly decreased in the STs. One possible explanation might be the general decrease in subsidiary material, as in (4). This would imply that there is a kind of hierarchy in the referential force of pronouns and demonstratives, a hypothesis that cannot be investigated here.

The use of conjunctions in simplified texts varies. It has decreased greatly in ST1 and ST4, increased in ST2, and remains unaltered in ST3. This raises some questions, first about the adequacy of the category itself, and, secondly, about the significance of conjunctions for reading comprehension. On the basis of the present analysis it seems that Halliday & Hasan's category of conjunctions should be extended to include all types of discourse organising material, e.g., cases where the original first... secondly is replaced by the first (feature)....the second (feature), etc. Secondly, even with this adjustment, ST1 uses -- relatively speaking -- far fewer conjunctions per number of sentences than the original. This indicates that the relationships which in OT are expressed by conjunctions and syntactical hierarchies are now left for the reader to infer from a sequence of syntactically simple sentences with a relatively complicated

development of subtopics.

Can this be considered to aid reading comprehension? There is earlier evidence that the facilitating effect on recall of information, and, by implication, on reading comprehension, of this type of organising material may have been overestimated (Meyer 1975:157ff., and Urquhart 1976).-- Meyer's results, however, have been obtained with native speakers of English, and Urquhart was also dealing with university students of English, whose language skills may have been fairly advanced. In both groups, then, the readers were presumably capable of taking advantage of redundancy on the topical level, and thus needed less support from the organising material. It still remains to find out whether students at lower levels of language learning could be trained to develop reading skills where the organising material is actually used to aid reading comprehension, not only, as Meyer (1975:158) suggests of some types, to aid the writer to organise his ideas.

4.4. Table 4, finally, shows the percentages of ties at different distances from their antecedents. As can be seen, there is little consistency in the changes. It seems likely that this is a feature which corresponds closely to the strategy of development of the discourse topic and its subtopics. Halliday & Hasan (1976:296) refer to these characteristics of the text with the term texture, and write: "Characteristically we find variation in texture, so that textuality is a matter of more or less. In some instances there will in fact be dense clusters of cohesive ties, giving a very close texture which serves to signal that the meanings of the parts are strongly interdependent and that the whole forms a single unity." They also suggest that paragraphs could be expected to form unities of this kind in written texts.

Distance	OT	ST1	ST2	ST3	ST 4
0 - 1	80.5	60.6	80.7	70.7	82.1
mediated 0 - 2	6.5	8.1	5.2	12.1	1.7
over 5	9.0	13.1	3.5	9.7	8.9

Table 4.
Distances of ties and their antecedents shown as percentages.

The observations of the STs studied here support Halliday & Hasan's ideas. ST1, with its individual way of developing the discourse topic, also

presents a pattern of cohesive distances which differs from the other texts. In it, the proportion of cases with the distance between 0 and 1 (the antecedent in the previous or next to previous sentence) has decreased, while the proportion of cases where the tie is mediated over two sentences or where it occurs at the distance of 5 or more, has increased. This seems, again, to reflect the strategy of creating a sequence of separate simple sentences to deal with information which in OT is expressed with longer, complex sentences.

4.5. Altogether, the results that have been presented above, though in no way conclusive, support earlier observations that there is an intuitive tendency in the simplification of informative texts to reduce the degree of semantic information. This is done, e.g., by avoiding reference with lexical items which add something to the concept referred to, that is, with synonyms, near-synonyms, or, in some texts, collocational items. These types of ties are replaced by an increasing number of repetition and pronominal ties. The generally observed shortening of sentences and of the whole text would point to the same phenomenon: information which is felt to be redundant is deleted, and at the same time the general level of abstraction is lowered, e.g., baby is used instead of human infant.

This observation makes one ask how redundant, in fact, the information is that has been lost in the process of simplication. It might be possible to test the loss of factual information by using a reading comprehension test on OT and the STs, with test questions based on OT. But there is more to the matter than the loss of factual information. Part of the message is, perhaps, contained in the manner the information is presented and the concepts that are used. To take a trivial example: the use of a concept like 'human infant' prepares the reader for a certain level of discussion, creating anticipation, even if unconscious, of a conceptual network typical to psychological, educational or medical discourse. On the other hand, the concept of 'baby' -- as a lexical entry no doubt almost synonymous with human infant -- more readily associates with ideas like 'cry', 'nappy', or 'feed'. For the student, the terms used may convey essential features of the conceptual apparatus used in a particular field of study, and thus link up with other texts using even more sophisticated concepts. It seems that in this respect there is a definite difference between, say, ST3 and ST4. We could say, in fact, that at least ST3 represents a different type of discourse from OT in terms of the relationship of the sender and the receiver of the message. This is an area where the theory of cohesion is of

obvious relevance for ESP teaching.

4.6. It remains to examine the changes caused by simplification in the use of non-topical types of material. The use of discourse organisers was discussed in connection with conjunction, on p. 173 - 4 above. Of the other types of non-topical markers, only modality markers appear in OT. Their treatment in the STs support Mountford's findings: there is a slight but consistent decrease in the use of non-topical markers like it seems that... we must suppose that... etc. per number of sentences: OT 5/10; ST1 6/20; ST2 2/11; ST3 2/10; and ST4 2/10. This supports the hypothesis presented above on p. 168 that in simplification syntactical considerations and considerations of sentence length override aspects of scientific rhetorics. -- It should be noted, however, that both ST2 and ST4 a d d a meta-linguistic marker to the text (The use of this term means...in ST2, and By this they mean... in ST4). It is tempting to see this as an indication of the simplifiers' (who are all language experts) wish to facilitate communication in their own area of expertise: linguistic explanation.

5. Final remarks

On the basis of the observations above we could say that in the texts analysed, simplification has affected both textual cohesion and coherence. Thus, simplification tends to restrict the degree of semantic information and to establish a more transparent pattern of reference in the text. The use of cohesive conjunctions varies inconsistently, while the use of modality markers has slightly decreased. Also, some simplifiers have added metalinguistic markers in the text.

The results would indicate a need for further research in some areas. One such area is the use of various discourse organisers and their role in reading comprehension. While earlier results seem to suggest that their value as reading aids has been overestimated, the results might be different if FL students were specifically trained to make use of organisers of this type.

Furthermore, we need to know more about the effect on the information content of a text of the reduction of semantic information dimensions. This reduction can be seen in the decrease of the number of synonymous, near-synonymous or collocational ties, and of redundant modifiers. Similarly, the effect of the lowering of the level of abstraction needs further investigation. In this area, comparison of simplifications produced by

language experts and experts of the particular field of study might give us further insights into what, from the point of view of the academic field concerned, is redundant and what is not.

One further problem is the treatment of non-topical material in simplified texts. If 'authenticity' of discourse is considered to be of value for the FL student, syntactic and semantic complexity may at times by unavoidable. This complexity alone makes possible a natural inclusion of material which helps the reader to process the meanings of the text, not as isolated facts, but as information relating to extra-textual phenomena, and so turns the text into an act of scientific communication.

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APPENDIX

ORIGINAL TEXT (OT)*

(1) When a human infant is born into any community in any part of the world it has two things in common with any other infant, provided neither of them has been damaged in any way either before or during birth. (2) Firstly, and most obviously, new born children are completely helpless. (3) Apart from a powerful capacity to draw attention to their helplessness by using sound there is nothing the new born child can do to ensure his own survival. (4) Without care from some other human being or beings, be it mother, grandmother, sister, nurse, or human group, a child is very unlikely to survive. (5) This helplessness of human infants is in marked contrast with the capacity of many new born animals to get to their feet within minutes of birth and run with the herd within a few hours. (6) Although young animals are certainly at risk, sometimes for weeks or even months after birth, compared with the human infant they very quickly develop the capacity to fend for themselves. (7) It would seem that this long period of vulnerability is the price that the human species has to pay for the very long period which fits man for survival as species.

(8) It is during this very long period in which the human infant is totally dependent on others that it reveals the second feature which it shares with all other undamaged human infants, a capacity to learn language. (9) For this reason, biologists now suggest that language is 'species specific' to the human race, that is to say, they consider the human infant to be genetically programmed in such a way that it can acquire language. (10) This suggestion implies that just as human beings are designed to see three-dimensionally and in colour, and just as they are designed to stand upright rather than to move on all fours, so they are designed to learn and use language as part of their normal development as well-formed human beings.

[*] Anne and Peter Doughty, Language and Community. Edward Arnold, London 1974.

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SIMPLIFIED TEXT 1 (ST1)

(1) All healthy, new-born babies, in all countries of the world, share two characteristics.

(2) The first characteristic which all human babies share, is that they are completely helpless. (3) The only thing they can do to persuade someone to look after them is to cry, and in this way they can draw attention to themselves. (4) A helpless baby will only survive if another human-being looks after it. (5) The other human-being need not necessarily be the mother. (6) A grandmother, sister, or someone who is not related to the child, may care for it.

(7) Human babies are unusual in this characteristic, if we compare humans to other animal species. (8) Many new-born animals can stand on their feet very soon after being born. (9) Often they can run with the herd a few hours later. (10) Young animals may get hurt and even die during their first year, but those that survive are able to look after themselves. (11) A young human child takes much longer to learn to look after itself. (12) We must suppose that this long period of learning is necessary to allow the human race to survive as a species.

(13) The second characteristic which human babies share, develops

during the long period of learning to survive. (14) This characteristic is the ability to learn language and it is shared by all babies who have normal, healthy brains. (15) Biologists suggest that learning language, during this time, while the young child cannot look after itself, is an ability which is only found in the human species. (16) They suggest that the human brain is specially designed to allow human beings to learn language. (17) We know already that human eyes are designed to see the world in colour and to recognise whether objects are solid or not. (18) We also know that human skeletons are designed to allow people to walk upright on two feet, and not use their hands as well. (19) Just as these are specially human characteristics, so, the scientists suggest, the ability to learn language is a specially human characteristic. (20) The human species is able to survive because all normal human beings are able to learn and to use language.

SIMPLIFIED TEXT 2 (ST2)

(1) At birth, all babies have two things in common with each other, wherever and whenever they are born. (2) (This is not true if the baby is in any way damaged.) (3) First, a new-born baby is unable to survive without help. (4) All he can do is to cry, which may attract the attention of those who can help him to survive -- his mother, grandmother, sister, nurse and so forth. (5) New-born animals, on the other hand, can stand on their feet very soon after birth and run with their herd a few hours later. (6) Although animals remain vulnerable to attack for weeks, in some cases for months, after birth, they become able to survive without help very much more quickly than human babies. (7) Man's survival as a species depends on this particualarly long period of infant vulnerability. (8) Secondly, all babies possess a capacity to learn language. (9) This capacity is revealed while the baby is still dependent on others for survival. (10) Biologists use the term "species specific" to describe how all undamaged human babies are genetically predisposed, or programmed, to the learning of a language. (11) The use of this term means that learning to speak a language is part of the normal and natural development of an undamaged human being, in the same way that it is normal to see in three dimensions and in colour, (and) in the same way that it is normal for a man to stand upright.

SIMPLIFIED TEXT 3 (ST3)

(1) When a baby is born (into any community anywhere) it has two things which it shares with all babies, providing none of them have suffered any damage. (2) First, it will be helpless. (3) And, apart from crying to attract attention, there is nothing it can do to change this helplessness. (4) Without help from other human beings the baby is unlikely to live.

(5) A baby's helplessness contrasts with the ability many young animals have -- the ability to stand up a few minutes after birth and to run a few hours later. (6) Although these young animals are in danger for some time after their birth they can help themselves much better than human babies. (7) It seems that humans have to pay for their long period of development with a long period of helplessness.

(8) It is during this period (when the baby is totally dependent) that it shows the second thing it shares with all babies -- the ability to learn a language. (9) Biologists now suggest that normal humans automatically learn a language. (10) Babies learn language because they are designed to learn one as part of their normal development, just as they are designed to see in three dimensions and in colour, and to stand upright.

SIMPLIFIED TEXT 4 (ST4)

(1) All human infants, wherever they are born, are alike in two respects, so long as they are not damaged in some way before or after birth. (2) Firstly, and most obviously, new-born infants are completely helpless. (3) They are able to draw attention to themselves by crying, but, apart from this, can do nothing to ensure their own survival. (4) They depend entirely upon other human beings, such as mother, grandmother, sister, nurse and so on. (5) Without the care of these they are unlikely to survive. (6) In this respect, human infants are unlike many new born animals, which sometimes need to get to their feet and run with the herd within minutes of birth. (7) For humans, the long period of nurturing which fits man for survival as a species means that there is an equally long period of dependence and therefore vulnerability.

(8) The second respect in which all human infants are alike is the capacity to learn language. (9) It is during the period of vulnerability that this capacity is exercised. (10) Because all undamaged human infants learn language, and no other creatures do, biologists say that language is 'species specific'. (11) By this they mean that the human infant is genetically programmed so that it can acquire language. (12) The learning of language is as much part of the normal development of human infants as, for instance, the ability to see three-dimensionally and in colour, or the characteristic of standing upright rather than going on all-fours.